

Mr. Speaker, I join with the Fifth District in congratulating Sheridan and Mildred Ostrander on their fiftieth wedding anniversary, and wish them and their extended family all the happiness in the future.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, on March 29, I was in New York City for meetings to discuss a number of homeland security issues with various officials and, therefore, missed two recorded votes.

I take my voting responsibility very seriously and would like the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to reflect that, had I been present, I would have voted, "yes" on recorded vote No. 94 and "yes" on recorded vote 95.

TANF REFORM

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, we have failed to make a real TANF reform that helps the working poor low-income single parents, children of poverty stricken families, and especially the men and women who have a drug conviction.

The TANF program contains several provisions that could decrease funding for individuals who received a drug felony conviction, which includes use, possession, or distribution. There is a lifetime ban on TANF and food stamps for individuals who receive a drug felony conviction after August 22, 1996, unless the State enacts legislation to disregard the ban completely or narrow it. Only 7 States and the District of Columbia have completely opted out of the ban with another 18 states allowing benefits to be paid to individuals with drug felony conviction in certain circumstances. For instance, in only three states the ban does not apply to those who finish their sentence and comply with their parole or probation, six states do not apply the ban to those in treatment or who have completed treatment. However, 41% of States ban TANF and food stamps based on the conviction alone. A report in 2002 estimated that the ban affected 92,000 women in 23 States studied.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a State issue. This is our Nation's issue. If we do not help all of those in need, if we stop giving assistance to some of our most needy, those with an addiction or who have been falsely accused of this conviction, our Nation will end up paying for it with higher rates of crime, higher recidivism rate, and a number of individuals remaining drug-users. The National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study found that women treated in federally funded treatment programs increased their employment and decreased their use of welfare. The number who reported being employed in the year after treatment increased by 25 percent. Incomes also increased by 6 percent while the number receiving public assistance decreased by 8 percent.

This clearly demonstrates that punishment and banning assistance is not the answer. Instead, federal assistance will assist to produce working, tax-paying citizens.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIM DeMINT

OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. DeMINT. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during rollcall votes 94 and 95. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on each of those rollcall votes.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LINCOLN DAVIS

OF TENNESSEE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 93, HR. 3905—Community Recognition Act of 2003, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SGT. ROBERT JEPSEN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to an outstanding patriot from my home state of Colorado. Sergeant Robert Jepsen recently returned from serving our nation in Operation Iraqi Freedom. While there, Robert was injured in a terrorist bombing attack near Baghdad. Sadly, the attack also claimed the lives of three of Robert's fellow 82nd Airborne Paratroopers. While we mourn the loss of Robert's comrades, I think it is appropriate to call the attention of this body of Congress, and our nation, to the sacrifices that Robert and his fellow soldiers have made on behalf of a grateful nation.

After graduating from high school, Robert answered his country's call to duty when he entered the United States Army. From the outset, it was clear that Robert had the qualities of a tremendous soldier. His bravery, intelligence and outstanding leadership did not go unnoticed, and Robert earned his Ranger Tab with the 101st Airborne Division, (Air Assault).

Throughout his recovery, Robert has drawn on the qualities that made him a great soldier. He continues to maintain a positive attitude and high spirits while recuperating at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and plans to return to school to realize his dream of becoming a pediatrician.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to rise and pay tribute to Sergeant Robert Jepsen. Robert's personal sacrifice and unwavering heroism is the true embodiment of patriotism. On behalf of my fellow Coloradans, and Americans, I wish to thank Robert for his bravery and noble service.

TWO OTHER WAYS TO HELP AND HONOR OUR TROOPS

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of two important bills enacted by the House earlier today that will provide much-needed and deserved assistance to the families of U.S. troops, and provide special recognition for the distinguished service of our military personnel in the global war against terrorism. This legislation would reimburse U.S. service personnel for their transportation costs and create two new campaign medals designating military service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The first bill, S. 2057, builds on the much-needed and highly successful Operation Hero Miles, which allows Americans to donate their unused frequent flier mileage, by also reimbursing troops for travel expenses to their final destinations. Under the U.S. Armed Forces Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program, those troops who traveled before Dec. 19, 2003 are not eligible to be reimbursed for commercial airfare beyond U.S. points of entry—Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas-Fort Worth, or Los Angeles. Also, there is still a need for travel assistance for soldiers on emergency leave, and for family members of soldiers being treated at U.S. military hospitals. This bill would allow troops to seek reimbursement retroactive to Sept. 25, 2003 which will help many of their families save hundreds of dollars each.

I am also proud to cosponsor and vote for a second bill passed by the House today, H.R. 3104, which would create separate campaign medals specifically designed to recognize service by members of the Armed Forces who participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. These decorations will be worn proudly by our troops and provide important symbolic recognition by distinguishing their service in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and emphasizing their specific and unique significance in our mission to win the global war against terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I salute the troops for their continuing valor, patriotism and commitment to our Nation. We thank them for their heroism and sacrifices, and we support these bills to honor their service and to provide much-needed relief for their families. Now that a year has passed since U.S. troops were deployed to Iraq, we wish them all a safe return and hope this legislation makes their trip home a little easier.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CLIMATE STEWARDSHIP ACT

HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that global warming is happening and that man is contributing to it. Now, it is our responsibility to work to mitigate the impacts of potentially catastrophic climate change.